

Efforts underway to refurbish Taq-e Bostan



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Taq-e Bostan historical site is located on a hillside with the same name and next to a fountain in the north of the city of Kermanshah, the capital of the western province of Kermanshah.

Head of Taq-e Bostan historical site, Mohammad Feyz-Aqaei, said that plans have been devised to restore the historical complex

and equip it with new facilities by mid-March 2024.

He added studies have been carried out to provide the necessary facilities required by the handicapped to visit the complex, ISNA wrote.

He added that measures were carried out to improve lighting in the historical site, adding special light sources are expected to be installed on the arches of the monument.

"Preliminary studies have been conducted in this regard in cooperation with one of the best consulting companies of the country," he said.

Feyz-Aqaei said that according to correspondences made with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry, an expert is expected to visit Taq-e Bostan to study the restoration of the 600-year-old tree located

in the complex.

He believes that renovating measures undertaken in Taq-e Bostan would help pave the way for the world registration of the valuable historical site.

"Taq-e Bostan has been registered on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites in 2007. We have tried to pursue its permanent global registration, which needs a national determination," he noted.

He said that the global registration of the monument would lead to an increase in the number of Iranian and foreign tourists choosing Kermanshah as their destination.

Taq-e Bostan, which literally means 'The Arch of the Garden' in Persian, is a site famous for its Sassanid (224-651 CE) rock reliefs. Located five kilometers from Kermanshah, at the heart of the Zagros Mountains, the site contains some of the best preserved reliefs from the Sassanid era. The site includes scenes such as the investitures of Ardashir II (reigned from 379-383



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CE), Shapur III (383-388 CE), and Khosrow II (570-628 CE).

The Ardashir II relief shows the king standing on top a bearded figure believed to be the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (330-363 CE), receiving the ring of kingship from Ahura Mazda, which means 'Wise Lord' or 'Lord of Wisdom' in the Avestan language.

The second relief, which

is located in a manmade cave built in the form of an *ivan* (terrace), shows two kings believed to be Shapur III standing next to his father Shapur II (309-379 CE), the conqueror who defeated the Romans.

A third manmade *ivan* at the site contains reliefs showing the investiture of the last great Sassanid king Khosrow II. To his right stands Ahura Mazda offering him the ring

of kingship and to his left stands the water goddess Anahita holding a small jar of water and offering Khosrow II another ring. There is also a relief of Khosrow II in full battle gear mounted on his favorite horse, the legendary black stallion, Shabdiz, which means midnight and was reputed to be the fastest horse in the world. Khosrow II is seen holding a lance in this relief.

Susa, the main key site for ancient Iran



The city of Susa is the main key site for ancient Iran. The only one to have an occupation span of 6,000 years – from the foundation in 4,200 BCE to the 13th century CE – it brought to light the Elamite Civilization that flourished in Iran long before the Persians built their universal empire.

Susa goes into the historical period at the end of the 4th millennium BCE by inventing an original writing system, the proto-elamite script, which was soon replaced by Sumerian cuneiform signs.

The city was founded on a small plain – aptly named Susiana and irrigated by the Karun and Karkheh rivers (modern Khuzestan) – that forms an eastern extension of

the great Mesopotamian plain. This geographical setting plays a defining role in the identity of the site: All through its history, Susa alternately shows a certain vulnerability towards Mesopotamian influences and an autonomy that has its roots in the mountainous part of the country. In fact, Susa is the lowlands capital of the political entity that is Elam, the double country extending from the Susiana to Fars, while Tale Malyan, founded around 3,000 BCE, governed the highlands. The seasonal movements of transhumant populations assured permanent contact between these two worlds.

Metallurgy was the principal craft in Susa, especially during the 3rd millennium BCE, when the

trans-elamite world took possession of the processing of alabaster, chlorite, semi-precious stone and shell.

Excavations at Susa have predominantly been led by French archaeologists and encompass all three mounds of the settlement: The Apadana in the north, named after the Persian palace built here around 521 BCE by Darius the Great, the Acropolis (or Acropole) in the west, which dominate the plain with its 38m of archaeological deposits, and finally the large mound of the Royal City (or Ville Royale) in the east, jutting out to the south at the so-called Donjon.

Discovery of Apadana

One of the first renowned visitors to Susa was Aus-

ten-Henry Layard, who soon after would come to fame through the British excavations at the Assyrian cities of Nimrud and Nineveh. During a stay with the Bakhtiari tribes in 1841-1842, he also briefly visited the Susiana. Archaeology as such does not begin at Susa until the appearance of British geologist-archaeologist W. K. Loftus (1820-1858 CE). Initially hired to mark out the Turkish-Persian border, he was later won by O. K. Rawlinson, famous decipherer of Old Persian and director of all British excavations in Mesopotamia, for the rather unrealistic task of uncovering the entire site. Accompanied by the artist Henry A. Churchill, whose role it was to draw everything

that there was, Loftus bravely went to work in two campaigns between 1851 and 1852.

His discovery of four column bases on the Apadana tell, bearing a trilingual inscription revealing the names of the builders of the palace and the term "Apadana" designating its hypostyle part, is of historic importance. A topographical map, tracing the exact elevation lines of the site, was also established. But the region was dangerous, the results not very spectacular compared to contemporary excavations in Assyria, and so Loftus had to leave off his work. Thirty years later, the French, namely Marcel Dieulafoy and his wife Jane, had no reason to complain of this decision.